

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

1. (Currently Amended) An endoscope comprising:  
  
an insertion unit having a soft portion;  
  
a small-diameter portion which is included in the soft portion section and  
whose outer diameter is substantially the same over the whole length thereof;  
  
a large-diameter portion which is formed on the operator side of the soft  
portion section opposite to the small-diameter portion and whose outer diameter is larger than  
the outer diameter of the small-diameter portion; and  
  
a tapered portion included in the soft portion linking the small-diameter portion  
and the large-diameter portion, wherein:  
  
at least part of the tapered portion is disposed forward the soft portion ~~an~~  
~~endoscope portion~~ separated 70 cm or less from ~~the a~~ distal ~~endoscope~~ end.
2. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 1, wherein the small-diameter  
portion is long enough to be bent 180° while forming an arc having a minimum radius.
3. (Currently Amended) An endoscope according to Claim 1, wherein at least  
part of the tapered portion is located forward an endoscope portion separated 45 cm from the  
distal ~~endoscope~~ end.
4. (Currently Amended) An endoscope according to Claim 2, wherein at least  
part of the tapered portion is located forward an endoscope portion separated 45 cm from the  
distal ~~endoscope~~ end.
5. (Currently Amended) An endoscope according to Claim 1, wherein indices  
indicating distances from the distal ~~endoscope~~ end are inscribed on the soft ~~section~~ portion.

6. (Currently Amended) An endoscope according to Claim 2, wherein indices indicating distances from the distal ~~endoscope~~ end are inscribed on the soft ~~section~~ portion.

7. (Currently Amended) An endoscope according to Claim 3, wherein indices indicating distances from the distal ~~endoscope~~ end are inscribed on the soft ~~section~~ portion.

8. (Currently Amended) An endoscope according to Claim 4, wherein indices indicating distances from the distal ~~endoscope~~ end are inscribed on the soft ~~section~~ portion.

9. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 5, wherein the plurality of indices is inscribed equidistantly.

10. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 6, wherein the plurality of indices is inscribed equidistantly.

11. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 7, wherein the plurality of indices is inscribed equidistantly.

12. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 8, wherein the plurality of indices is inscribed equidistantly.

13. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 9, wherein the tapered portion extends between two of the indices.

14. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 10, wherein the tapered portion extends between two of the indices.

15. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 11, wherein the tapered portion extends between two of the indices.

16. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 12, wherein the tapered portion extends between two of the indices.

17. (New) An insertion unit for an endoscope, the insertion unit having a soft portion comprising:

a small-diameter portion which is included in the soft portion and whose diameter is substantially the same over the whole length thereof;

a large diameter portion which is formed on the operator side of the soft portion opposite to the small diameter portion and whose outer diameter is larger than the outer diameter of the small diameter portion; and

a tapered portion included in the soft portion linking the small-diameter portion and the large-diameter portion, wherein:

at least part of the tapered portion is disposed forward the soft portion separated 70 cm or less from the distal end.